

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 932
By Gresham

A RESOLUTION to honor the memory of Irene Boyd Saunders of
Rossville.

WHEREAS, the members of this General Assembly were greatly saddened to learn of the passing of Irene Boyd Saunders; and

WHEREAS, Irene Saunders was an exemplary public servant and consummate professional who worked assiduously to improve the quality of life for her fellow citizens in numerous capacities; and

WHEREAS, through her extraordinary talent and steadfast efforts, Mrs. Saunders distinguished herself in the field of music, and enjoyed a long and productive life as a professional musician and music educator, earning the respect and admiration of her fellow musicians, audiences, and students alike for her musical talents and dedication to her art; and

WHEREAS, born in Somerville on August 20, 1915, Irene Boyd Saunders was the daughter of Luther Farris Kee and Maggie Clay McDowell; she had three brothers, Neal Kee, Morris Kee, and Herman McDowell, and one sister, Beatrice Kee Leath; and

WHEREAS, after the death of both parents in 1917, these young children were adopted and raised by various relatives; two-year-old Irene was adopted by her great-aunts, Miss Mollie Boyd and Miss Victoria Boyd, and her bachelor uncle, Mr. Clay Boyd, and grew up in their old Victorian house located on Main Street in Somerville, where the Baptist church now stands; and

WHEREAS, Irene Boyd Saunders attended elementary and high school in Somerville, where she was a precocious student, skipping two grade levels and graduating at the age of sixteen; at an early age, she began her musical instruction under Mrs. Ella Crawford, and starting at the age of thirteen, she frequently played for services at the Somerville Methodist Church and also taught private piano lessons; and

WHEREAS, at age sixteen, Mrs. Saunders taught music classes at the high school and was appointed pianist and accompanist at the annual revival meetings held at Joyner's

Campground near Dancyville; she worked on the staff of *The Fayette Falcon* newspaper and then took a job at the Fayette County Extension Office, where she was employed until her marriage in 1936 at age twenty-one; and

WHEREAS, Miss Irene Boyd met Mr. S. N. Saunders, her husband-to-be, at a Methodist Youth Fellowship function; they had their first date in May of 1936, married on October 4, 1936, and moved to the family homestead at Rossville; and

WHEREAS, Irene Saunders continued teaching and performing music in Rossville, soon becoming a member of Rossville Methodist Church and playing the piano and organ there; her career as a professional musician and music educator steadily grew throughout Southwest Tennessee, where she played for countless weddings and funerals, taught group music classes at Rossville Academy, and gave private lessons in Collierville, Germantown, Somerville, Moscow, and Grand Junction; and

WHEREAS, Mrs. Saunders enjoyed a distinguished thirty-eight year tenure as the organist at St. Andrew's Episcopal Church in Collierville, and was a longtime member and officer of the American Guild of Organists; and

WHEREAS, in 1970, she began a ten-year course of master organ instruction under the tutelage of Richard White, the eminent organist at St. John's Episcopal Church in Memphis, where she presented a most memorable organ recital; she was also the solo recitalist at Washington Street United Methodist Church in Columbia, South Carolina, where she was invited to play the dedicatory recital on the newly renovated pipe organ; and

WHEREAS, Mrs. Saunders retired from her career in music at the age of eighty-six, after more than seventy years at the keyboards; she touched and enriched thousands of lives through her music, and continued to play for services at the Rossville United Methodist Church until her passing at the age of ninety; and

WHEREAS, Mrs. Saunders was deeply devoted to her family, and she always endeavored to remain true to family values of the highest order; and

WHEREAS, Irene Saunders enjoyed thirty-six years of loving companionship with her devoted husband, S.N. Saunders, who was killed in a farm accident in 1972; and

WHEREAS, she is survived by her four sons, Boyd, Clay, Lanny, and Lee Saunders; nephews, Erwin Kee and David Leath; nieces, Sarah Beth Taylor, Peggy Tapp, Shirley Lawler,

and Emily McMin; nine grandchildren; ten great-grandchildren; and countless music students and colleagues who ennobled her life and continue her legacy of integrity, probity, diligence, and dedication; and

WHEREAS, it is fitting that this General Assembly should pause to remember the bountiful life of this exceptional musician and human being; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED FOURTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we honor the memory of Irene Boyd Saunders, reflecting fondly upon her dedication to music, her impeccable character, and her stalwart commitment to living the examined life with courage and conviction.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we express our sympathy and offer our condolences to the family, friends, and many students of Irene Boyd Saunders.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.